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ABSTRACT

This paper problematizes the role of caring in women's persistence in literacy programs. The paper draws from the author/researcher's doctoral research, a study of 10 mid-life multi-ethnic Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language women learners and their lifelong experiences of literacy, schooling, and learning, both inside and outside of a Hawaii literacy program. It explains that since 7 out of the 10 women left the program within a year's time, the author/researcher felt compelled to focus on this issue. The women were interviewed, and their stories were developed in the form of both case study narratives and thematic analysis comparisons. The paper presents five case studies which reveal "caring" amidst the socio-historical and cultural changes taking place in the subjects' lives. A grounded theory approach was used to gain a holistic picture of the women learners' experiences over a life time and of the strategies, internal processes, and pre-conditions of their literacy and persistence experiences. Feminist theories of care were used to highlight the women's caring activities in their families and workplaces and the literacy program. Ethnographic methods were used to uncover the women's experiences with literacy, learning, and schooling. It concludes that literacy programs can help learners persist by paying attention to their histories, their relationships, and the deeper meanings of what they say. (Contains 97 references.) (BT)

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"Oh, So Lucky to Be Like that, Somebody Care:" Five Case Studies of Selected Mid-life Women Learners Seeking Care In a Literacy Program

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As I care for others and am cared for by them, I become able to care for myself. The characteristic "I must" arises in connection with this other in me, this ideal self, and I respond to it. It is this caring that sustains me when caring for the other fails, and it is this caring that enables me to surpass my actual uncaring self in the direction of caring. (Noddings, 1984, pp.49-50)

Introduction to Research Problem

The quotation in the title of this paper is from Donna, a Portuguese woman in her early 50s who was enrolled in a computer-assisted literacy program in a semi-rural town of Hawai'i that was undergoing tsunami-like socioeconomic changes. Yet she rarely attended due to her caregiving at home—for an ill husband, and for grandchildren whose mother was working at the newly opened 24 hour Walmart, turning Donna's schedule into a "24 hour thing you know." While she cares for everyone around her, including five animals, people give her little caring in return, "I mean like caring and stuff and be there for you, you know, like I said, I want to sit and talk to him [her husband] about something, about the kids. You cannot." While at home, she watched romances on TV, instilling in her a desire for emotional reciprocation, "I just love a good love story," she sighed, "when I see them all happy and loving and stuff—I wonder, oh, so lucky to be like that, somebody care." If she could, she told me, she would read love stories, that reminded her of these shows, that is, if there wasn't "so much stuff going in my mind." She would also come to the program more often. But, the main problem, she said, is that "you have no choice. I mean in life, I have to help. I cannot say no. So it's hard. So I try not to make 'em [her plans] around them [the family], but every time I say OK, I'm going [to do] this, then something else come up."

Donna's story is similar to other women learners in the program who struggled with caring and persistence. While Donna was presently caregiving to family, other women learners were caregivers in the past, or were professional caregivers in the paid work force. These women, five of whom I will focus on in this paper, looked to the program for socio-emotional supports (see social support literature, like, Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987, Antonucci, 1986; Barrera, 1986; Jackson, Fischer, & Mcallister, 1977; Fischer, 1982; Stack, 1974; Pearlin, 1989; Thoits, 1982 Uehara, 1990, Van Sonderen, et al., 1989) and as a means of recharging, refining, and redefining their caring roles and functions.

Donna wanted somebody to care for her, and she turned to the literacy program to unearth a niche for herself around her family's needs. She said, "I would love it, to sit, come every day, doing only for myself." Donna's dreams of giving something to herself, like many mid-life women who enroll in literacy programs were dashed because her family role superceded her abilities to attend. These family roles and responsibilities, ones that extended to their paid work lives, were not just personal problems. They were linked inextricably to the changing socio-historical and economic climate where they lived; Donna's caregiving work in the informal economy (for her grandchildren) was the foundation of her family's ability to survive in the formal economy which was changing from an agricultural to service base, making it difficult for everyone to adjust to this new economic climate. Additionally, Donna's gender, her generation, and local culture created tensions between school and home. Her caring, and her emotions about it, were interwoven with these socio-demographic conditions, and became integral issues for her. Donna and the other women in the study seemed to seek literacy education as part of a caring function and role in their lives.

Women caring for and responding to the dependency needs of others is naturalized in society. Women may even seek out adult educational opportunities in so far as their "self-advancement was about helping others." (Belenky, et al., 1986, pp. 46-47). This helping role has a historical basis, with literacy as part of "women's work' for the family, and can lead women to internalize it to the extent that they believe increased

education can turn them into "better mothers" (see, Luttrell, 1989; 1986; Salice, 1988). Donna, for example, felt responsible for her grandchildren's literacy. Yet internal conflicts about this role arise when women realize they also need support, "worn out, dejected, tired, depressed...we need or desire others to care for us. In such situations we may feel that we have a right to our need for care being met." (Waerness, in Gordon, Benner, Noddings, 1996, p. 234). Caring, then, can be viewed as contradictory and difficult for women because while it eases external tensions in the environment, it brings on internal ones, especially with the recognition "that what is missing in women's lives is that they have never had the consistent experience of this being done for them" (Eichenbaum, & Orbach, 1983, p. 47). It is important to acknowledge that for women, caring is about "both labor and feelings." (Waerness, in Gordon, Benner, & Noddings, 1996, p. 234). "Caring," says Hilary Graham, "is experienced as a labour of love in which the labour must continue even when the love falters." (in Abel and Nelson,1990, p. 8) How can literacy programs validate the complicated needs and tensions of women learners who are caring at home and work, while developing their sense of self-care and persistence in a literacy program? Gathering women learners' stories and analyzing narratives of their literacy and persistence experiences is critical for understanding the tensions they experience as they try and attend a program.

In this paper, I problematize the role of caring in women's persistence in literacy programs. I draw on my doctoral research, which was a study of ten mid-life, multiethnic, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) women learners and their lifelong experiences of literacy, schooling, and learning, both inside and outside of a Hawai'i literacy program. Since seven out of the ten women left the program within a year's time, I felt compelled to focus on this issue. I interviewed the women, and developed their stories, in the form of case study narratives, in addition to comparing them in a thematic analysis, with my year long observations of the literacy program. There were gaps between what the women wanted from the program (their holistic needs, including an emotional and a social support system that allowed them to be focused on) and what the program delivered (skills-based programming with few formal supports).

Learning about the women's life stories enabled me to understand their complex relationships, which were difficult for them to negotiate in the program.

Setting a larger context for caring is important especially in this case for mid-life women on the Big Island in East Hawai'i, where major shifts were happening in the private and public domains. The women's caring could be viewed as a part of their rural informal economies as well as their material resources becoming institutionalized within global restructuring (Sachs, 1996), turning it into a transitional practice as it was moving from household into market and bureaucratic forms (Fisher & Tronto, 1990). Most of the women grew up in rural and semi-rural areas at a time when caring relied on extended family. The kinship network centralized the women's caring as something that was integrated and important in the fabric of social life (see, Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Sachs, 1996; Stack, 1975). Caring for siblings, for the family garden, food preparation, "working with your hands", and "living off the land" were central to the women's upbringings, as were values of, survival, and collective learning. The women's generation also played a role in their caring, but with stress, since they wanted to care for themselves, after raising children, but with little emotional or material support to do so (see, Doyal, 1995; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Sommers & Shields, 1987). These new conflicts were exacerbated by worries about their financial futures, health problems and concerns, with few institutional supports specifically for them (see, Doyal, 1995; Sommers & Sheilds, 1987). Who was going to care for the carers (Doyal, 1995)? Adult education programs need to adapt to women's backgrounds and life cycle needs (Merriam in Knox, 1979).

Many of the women attended the program, in large part, to adapt to the rapid, socioeconomic changes taking place around them. The purpose of the computer-assisted literacy program was to serve as a bridge between the old sugar economy, ending by the early 90s, and the promised service sector which was starting to take hold. The program also connected itself with national efforts to remediate low literacy, and adopted the National Institute for Literacy stance and slogan of 1998, "Literacy—It's a Whole New World" which was advertised in the local newspaper and promoted in the program. So,

the workforce development and skills-based theme was deeply rooted in the program's origins, as it stressed the "new world" of work and literacy in the community. The skills-content, emphasized in commercial grammar workbooks, and computer-assisted software programs, Standard English pronunciation lessons, were reinforced with quantitative assessments, well-monitored one-on-one tutoring, and religious documentation of all activities (in logs and reports) for both ABE and ESL students. A major incentive for the birth of the program, in 1991 was to retrain workers and instill self-sufficiency to replace the entrenched "paternalistic" sugar industry model—a message echoed in the media, and by employment counselors and educators:

> One of the primary target groups of the [literacy center] are the displaced agricultural workers of East Hawai'i County who now find it necessary to compete for jobs in other sectors. Many of these people believed that employment in the agricultural industry was for a lifetime and they never gave much credence to the necessity of learning those skills necessary to function in other jobs. This program has proved extremely successful in teaching many of these people the basic skills they require to qualify, apply, and compete for jobs in the open market. (Literacy program correspondence, March 7, 1996, p. 1).

Most of the women worked in low-paying "feminized" industries--health care, the informal economy, seasonal work in the diversified agricultural sector (i.e., papayas, macadamias, and coffee), and tourist, garment and pineapple industries. While they wanted to improve their work lives, and obtain skills, they wanted more than income-producing outcomes, and came for interrelated personal reasons (MacKeracher, 1989). The changing economy had put tensions on the women, and the program, within its narrow scope, had difficulty meeting their complex needs.

Theoretical Frameworks

Grounded Theory

I used several lenses to understand the tensions of the mid-life women learners experiences as they struggled to attend a literacy program. A Grounded Theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to gain a holistic picture of women learners' experiences over a life time and the strategies, internal processes, and pre-conditions of their literacy and persistence experiences. Although a major quantitative study conducted in the late 1980's (Omnitrak Research & Marketing Group, 1990) showed that East Hawai'i, and the Hilo area, had the lowest literacy rates in the state, there was a lack of in-depth information about literacy participants and their problems from their perspectives, even though programs were designed to improve their lives. Since women comprised the majority of program participants, it would be important to examine and learn about their concerns. I wanted to study this phenomenon close-up and from the perspectives of those who were classified as "low-literate" women. I could listen to their words and "ground" their stories in local contexts and their histories. I could also compare what they told me about their experiences with the practices of the program to determine if they corresponded and helped.

Critical Education frameworks for Hawai'i

Ethnographic and historical studies in Hawai'i on home and schooling practices of Hawaiians, Asian-Americans, and local culture have revealed clashes (ALU LIKE, 1990; Gallimore, Boggs, & Jordon, 1974; Howard, 1974; Hammond, 1992; Levin, 1992; Kahakalau, 1994;; Jordon, 1985; Salice, 1991; Sato, 1989; Steuber, 1981, Tamura, 1994). These studies focused on how learning styles and language practices in the home, such as using observation skills, is not practiced in classrooms, and that schools in Hawai'i, with their deep-seated history of language and racial segregation, need to adapt to these cultural differences. One recent study (Meyer, 1998) reported on the Hawaiian value of, "seeing yourself through the lens of the other" (p. 118), and a family dependency orientation, which conflicts with the "dualistic" values in schools, similar to the "community value orientation" that characterizes local culture in Hawai'i (Yamamoto, 1979, p.105). Women may seek out literacy education in Hawai'i for more personal than professional reasons, prizing everyday basic needs over literacy and with

the family as central, as Salice (1991) found in her study of Hawaiian women enrolled in a literacy program in a rural area of Oahu.

Feminist Care Theories

I used feminist theories of care (Abel & Nelson, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Gordon, Benner, & Noddings, 1998; Larrabee, 1993; Noddings, 1984, 1990, 1992; Tronto, 1990, 1993, 1999; Waerness, 1996) to highlight the women's caring activities in their families and workplaces, as well as the program. Kari Waerness defines caring as, "taking care of the well-being of others" in which "the carer shows concern, consideration, affection, devotion toward the other, the cared for" (in Gordon, Benner, Noddings, 1998, p. 234). While caring is rooted in reciprocity, it is also a gendered function in society, with women's roles as, Carol Gilligan first articulated, as "nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies." (in Noddings, 1984, p.96). Caring, according to Nel Noddings, who extends Gilligan's concerns, is a cyclical, fundamentally social response to the needs of the self as it relates to the needs of the community, "Everything we care about is somehow caught up in concerns about the self, " she writes, "and having posited a relational definition of the self, it is even harder to extricate individual selves from the relations in which they are formed." (Noddings 1992, p.74). Because of this collective view of the self, women tend to use interpersonal reasoning in their decision-making, prioritizing relationships over abstract societal principles and rules (Norma Haan in Noddings,, 1990, p.158). Donna, for example, showed interpersonal reasoning in her decision to stay home and watch her grandchildren, even though she wanted to be, "doing only for myself," and compromised her "no show" status in the program.

Fisher and Tronto (1990) also define caring in broad terms, "that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible." (p. 40). But they conceptualize it more as an activity tied to women's labor and material conditions. Caring, contains different components that clash and create tensions for women because of time, energy, and limited resources. They classify caring into different parts: caring about, taking care of, care-giving, and care-

receiving. Caregiving is the most involved, hands-on, continuous time commitment, requiring detailed everyday knowledge that can change moment to moment (see also Tanner, et al., in Gordon, Benner, Noddings, 1996) and is not often conducive to institutionalized environments, for example, with constant inspections, and accounting practices which de-humanize patient interactions (Diamond in Abel and Nelson, 1990). In addition, caregivers often receive low-pay, little emotional support themselves, and are often in poor health (Doyal, 1995; Sommers & Shields, 1987). The gendered nature of caring is critiqued by Friedman (in Larrabee, 1993) as part of women's "moral labor" in society, with women managing private relationships so that men can manage public affairs. The "sister-in-kinship" caring model that Tronto and Fisher propose as a compromise between society and self (in Abel and Nelson, 1990, p.55) closely matches women's holistic needs in both private and public domains.

Participation and Persistence literature for women

Family demands, transportation, and childcare, plus abuse, and poverty are often cited as barriers to women's participation and persistence in literacy programs (see, Kathleen Rockhill, 1990, Laubach Literacy Action, 1993; Wendy Luttrell, 1989, 1997, as examples of recent studies focusing specifically on literacy and the complex barriers in women's lives). Yet, as Nelly Stromquist (1989) has argued, barriers to women's participation in literacy programs are not just a function of private relations, and programmatic mismatches like schedules, but linked to the sexual division of labor which prevents girls and women from achieving education, improving their levels of literacy, and escaping poverty. It is imperative to pay attention to structural issues in society that are hidden obstacles for women. Phyllis Safman (1986) further emphasizes how women's roles, including their acculturation, sex role stereotyping, and personal problems that lead to drop out of high school contribute to women's low literacy. The "excessive attention" to individual motivation (Stromquist, 1989) and individualized programming, can neglect women's issues and their needs for collective learning (see, Belenky, et al., 1986; Carmack, 1992; Kazemak, 1988; Fingeret, 1984; Luttrell, 1996). Individually oriented programs may ignore women's ways of knowing, and cultures, approaching literacy from an individual viewpoint, and separating literacy skill acquisition from real-life issues

(Auerbach, 1989; Fingeret, 1992; Fingeret, in Kazemak, 1988, p. 24). One exploratory study of African-American women learners reported that service-oriented goals, for church, other adult learners, and children were important in their persistence. But the women relied little on their social networks and depended more on themselves to persist (Fitzsimmons, 1991). If women are the ones supplying the supports in their personal networks, and these are not reciprocated, they may look outside of them to get their needs met (see, Peck, 1993). For these reasons, care, concern, and community may be important attributes to foster in adult literacy classrooms as a social support system for women (see, Hill-Collins, 1988; hooks, 1994; Luttrell, 1996), as long as they aren't homogenizing (Gowen and Bartlett, 1997; Hayes & Flannery, 2000;). This approach can ease the pressures on women and help them cope with increasing institutional literacy demands (see, Brandt, 1995, 1998, 1999) not to mention other demands and tensions placed upon them in their homes and communities (Fingeret & Drennon, 1997).

This more critical and humanistic notion of caring is different than the kind of "human capital" caring which improves marketability in adult education programs, and focuses on individual self-sufficiency and economic benefits (Baptiste, 1998; Kerka, 1996). Yet this caring orientation that is often considered the "soft side of literacy" and promoted in limited ways, for example, in family literacy programs (Luttrell, 1996, p. 338). Wendy Luttrell (1997), in her study of women learners, found that women's complex relationships, particularly with their mothers, were an important factor in their participation in adult literacy programs and that programs needed to accommodate for women learners' values and practices of caring and knowing. What were the women's needs for being "somebody" (Horsman, 1990; Luttrell, 1997; Rockhill, 1990), or "getting somewheres" (Kneubuhl, 1996) in an agricultural context of Hawai'i? The ethic of care has been reinforced with "o'hana" (family) values but women may feel the brunt of caring due to double work days, low pay in the service and tourist industries and in home production (see, Chinen, 1988ab; Trask, 1992, 1993).

Reading-response Frameworks

Clues about the women's needs for self-care outside of the program were evident in the ways they used reading, and through other people, at home for emotional and deeply personal reasons. Lourdes, for example, read prayer and popular self-improvement books when she got the "blues." Gloria read the Bible on a daily basis and interpreted passages with her pastor's wife. Donna wanted to read love stories similar to the shows she watched on TV, and felt badly about not being able to thoroughly read children's books to her grandkids. Janice Radway (1991), extending Nancy Chodorow's female personality development theory, in her study of romance readers, found that women read romance as an emotional release and to compensate for the caring they did not receive in their normal relationships. The books "provide a utopian vision in which female individuality and a sense of self are shown to be compatible with nurturance and care by another" (p.55). Reading self-help literature may be important for developing women's cultural expression, and self-esteem, not to mention their interest in reading (see, Cho & Krashen, 1994; Rowland, 2000; Simmonds, 1992). Women learners may seek literacy education and reading for both personal and social meanings, that connect to their cultures and roles, their emotions, and their self-care needs.

Methods and Analysis

Ethnographic methods (from Spradley, 1979, 1980; Siedman, 1991) were used to uncover the women's experiences with literacy, learning, and schooling. Five loosely structured interviews were conducted over the course of the year with the women. They told me stories about their schooling and work experiences, their learning practices in their family of origin, and about their mass media and social network uses. I also conducted biographical interviews which revealed major life events and served as a basis for my questions. With many interviews, I could ask more questions over a longer period of time, while becoming socialized into their lives as a participant-observer (Bruyn, 1970; Jorgenson, 1989). I also used feminist perspectives to illuminate gender and power issues in their lives (Reinharz, 1992). It would be important to hear the women's stories in their first and second languages so they could unfold in an open-ended way and I could get an insider's perspective (Briggs, 1986) on the problem; Hawai'i Creole English (HCE), commonly known as Pidgin, and a locally favored form of conversing, was spoken by

both the ESL women and the ABE women and used as an interview technique. Talk story has been used in qualitative research with local women and as a means for developing rapport and trust for people not used to being interviewed and whose historical perspectives on social change are valuable (see, Kodama-Nishimnoto, 1984; Lebra, 1991; Kneubuhl, 1996; Salice, 1991 for case studies on women in Hawai'i)

The women were selected through purposive sampling (Siedman, 1991), which supported my goal to obtain rich complex data about how literacy arises in multiethnic mid-life women's learners' lives. In addition to interviewing the women, I also observed them in the program, examined their work folders, and talked to the staff about them. Additional interviews with community literacy educators and social service counselors expanded my perspectives on the problem and gave me a holistic view of literacy and education in this particular context. Other ethnographic techniques such as documentary analysis of literacy program materials, community historical records, and environmental and community print, in conjunction with photography supplemented the interviews. I immersed myself in the community for two years, and was an ABE and ESL teacher in a nearby program, and a tutor in the program I researched. I also lived with a family, and participated in many community events and activities. Through Gloria, a student in the literacy program who became my informant, I learned about many issues in the community.

The women's stories were examined first with a thematic analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to locate emerging themes surrounding their learning. The grounded theory method of systematically gathering "sensitized" themes and linking them, and cross comparing them allowed me to see patterns across the women and connect this to their gender, generation, rural backgrounds, cultures, and socio-economic conditions. The other analysis I used was case study narratives (Gluck & Patai, 1991; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Riesmann, 1993; Witherell & Noddings,1990) for an in-depth examination of each woman's literacy and schooling experiences over a lifetime. This approach captured the women's storytelling and unique experiences; ones that both scarred and

inspired them, for example, writing a Living Will. These stories shed light on the women's relationships that led me to pay close attention to their histories with caring.

Cases of the Women: Lourdes, Gloria, Margaret, Donna, Yasuko

The following case studies reveal caring (defined as women's labor and feelings) admist the socio-historical and cultural changes taking place in their lives.

Lourdes: "And I was Really Scared Because They Didn't Train Us"

Lourdes was a fifty year old Mexican-American woman who came from a small town near Guadalajara, Mexico in the early 60s through California where she met her local husband, and then in the early 1970s to Hawai'i. She had two grown children, attended adult schools, and worked in various industries from sewing to processing papayas. She was now a health aide.

Lourdes liked her aide job more than these other jobs. But those were better than being a housewife which made her feel dependent and controlled by her husband, "he likes to have control over all the money that's for sure, " she said, "I mean bills and stuff. he controls everything." She wished he had supported her more when she was younger, "if he really support me, I would be more that what I am now, " she said, and did not want to be dependent like her mother was on her father, who Lourdes said, " had a lot of control over my mother."

Her work in health care started as a candy-striper in Mexico, continued with volunteer work for the elderly in Hilo, and up to her present job. Lourdes' looked to other women for guidance with her career, like the nun she watched on TV every night, and Oprah, as well as her tutor and co-workers. Yet, a constant source of frustration for Lourdes on her job was having to "say something on paper." Learning new abbreviations, like "stb" and technical terms like, "decline" on a constant basis was stressful. She said, "I moved to the same company but a different job who [that] would require a lot of writing. And I was really scared because they didn't train us. I didn't know why [what] I would be doing." A big problem for her was the demand of

immediate note-taking, "I don't know how to take notes. How to write fast enough. Like today in the meeting, we have this calendar, and you have to fill em out real quick " Learning this medicalized terminology as part of caring was vastly different than how she felt about caring for the patients. She said, " The people. I love old people....I feel comfortable with them....I feel needed maybe. I feel I can do for them so much they cannot do for themselves. And I always want to work them." The regimented way she had to write at work, led her to the literacy program to work on her "spelling" in order to fulfill her note-taking duties, "'Bp' is blood pressure. Umm standby assist 'stb' ...Standby assist is people who cannot walk by themselves and I need to be with them." The institutionalization of Lourdes' caring and the literacy tasks, credentials, and testing that go along with her job has increased nationally in the health industries (See Cook-Gumperz, 1997). Her participation in the literacy program, where, unlike at work, she told me there was little "pressure" helped her to feel more confident about her English abilities, and also because she said it was "free" and better than the ten dollar an hour tutor she first called. Even though she wasn't sure she was progressing, she felt comfortable, "yea, yea, I don't know if I learn anything, but I trying...I feel like if I have a problem and then something I can not write too, I know that I can come here and they can help me. Maybe I feel like how you say that, not protective, but confident maybe."

Although she first came to the program because she felt frightened about her literacy abilities, she felt that the staff and tutors were "nice" and welcoming, "the first day I came I talked to J. and she was really nice. And I guess ask her what is it. I didn't know what it was. And umm I don't remember what she told me. She give me a paper and I fill 'em out then I told her why I wanna come here. I need help in spelling. And she told me that they never had tutors in that time but she could put 'em in the waiting list. And then she said no, you can start coming already." Her continuing work with her tutor appeared to change everything for her. She gave this tutor gifts and spoke well of her. Lourdes' tutor clearly did more than "stand by and assist" her which seemed like a major reason for her persistence in the program, and which was evident on her progress reports, which stated, for example, "after st was assigned her new TTR, she began to make definite progress. W/in 2 mos, st began to grasp fundamental grammar concepts. Also

attendance increased." Yet Lourdes' writing needs were neglected in favor of pronunciation drills. Lourdes began to wonder if it was her speech that was causing difficulties with writing, and whether she could master standard English grammar rules given her use of Pidgin. Her tutor focused on correcting her pidgin and this showed up in her progress reports too. Eventually Lourdes adopted the tutor's instructional approach, "Because I think I need the speech. I tell people I coming for the speech classes. Cause one time [a literacy program staff member] was teaching me the correction between "b" and "v." Lourdes was one of the few women who stayed in the program past the year period that I studied the program.

Yasuko: "In Case My Kids Go Away From Me."

As a child in Okinawa, Yasuko took care of many younger siblings and sold vegetables for her mother to afford school supplies. As a teen, she dropped out of school to support her family, becoming a nanny to a wealthy family who failed to send her back to school even though they promised. She immigrated to Hawai'i in her twenties, meeting and marrying her local husband soon after, and was a caregiver to her father-in-law until he died. She was currently working in a nursery, and each day, walked one mile home. She was fifty. Yasuko was living with her teenage daughter who she was close to, her husband who she fought with frequently, as well as two unemployed sons.

Yasuko was worried her daughter would move away from her and she would need to write her letters. Since her daughter played a central role for Yasuko, emotionally, she was worried about her possible departure. She slept with her daughter, took classes with her, and shared a car with her too. This was why she came to the program. "Well first I was thinking [about the program], when I went to [the program], to tell them in case my kids go away from me, I can send letter to them you know I communicate…I don't know if they go away, we don't have any communication yea." Training her daughter to be independent was important to Yasuko, who sacrificed many of her education goals for her family from when she was young, in Okinawa. She taught her daughter money management skills and reminded her about the importance of independence and education so that she wouldn't get caught in a caregiving cycle like

Yasuko, "I didn't have education from small time, I was telling kids, school come first. When you guys go from high school not boyfriend. Girlfriend. Come first school." She tells her daughter that she cannot always take care of her and that she needed to take care of herself, "Yea, I always telling her you know I cannot take care of you until I gonna die. You gotta be independent."

Yasuko was upset that her two unemployed sons, who used her and her husband's cars and their gas money, also expected her to do their laundry and without any support from her husband: "He never help. So if not, I going to have to stay 12:00 like that. So one day I tell the kids, gotta wash dishes…You know what my husband told—wahine [woman] job….wahine job. Wash dishes. Hang clothes. But I working outside in anthurium farm. Inside house I cannot pain, though I need rest too. He just eat himself, sleep….I say, heh, I work enough already. I get sick you." The constant family wars over domestic duties and cars ultimately led to Yasuko leaving the program due to her daughter's work schedule and their car-sharing.

Yasuko was also worried about a cyst in her breast and possibly getting cancer, and dying, making her want to change her Living Will, "if anything happen the kids, no need worry about for financial for funeral costs. I pay 8 months….yea I no like the kids gonna be suffer in case something happen." She learned that writing was important, not just for communicating through letters, but for asserting her "will," especially in legal documents. As a younger woman, she caregave to her father-in-law and was angry about being left out of his Will. She remembers how difficult caregiving was for him, "oh one month-- over one month it make me crazy…and cooking part too. He grumbled like, oh my husband, he didn't say anything to father ….I getting sick myself too. So you know, I just...did what he wanted to do."

In spite of all these tensions between herself, her husband, and her sons, she was given a male tutor in the program, even though she asked for a female. Like Lourdes, she was given more reading and pronunciation drills than writing opportunities. The focus was on her oral skills and correcting her use of grammar, like, "hurry" instead of

"hurried" -- student translates to Japanese and st needs to learn English without translating." Homework was given to her which she couldn't do at home. Her low self-esteem was also noted, as were comments about wanting to work in a group.

Donna: "Doing Only for Myself"

Donna was born in 1946 in Hilo, and grew up in a Portuguese area in a large family. She was raised by her mother and her stepfather, who she despised. She dropped out of school in the 10th grade, and married a *Nisei* (second generation Japanese-American), had three children and a few grandchildren. Donna was expected to caregive to her grandchildren all the time even though she admitted, "they drive you crazy." She continued, " I rather go work. Yea, but then I look at them and I pity because they love me and I love, you know. But sometimes days I get grouchy cause I tired. Like I said it's a 24 hour thing." This was why coming to the literacy program, "doing only for myself," as she stated seemed like an impossible dream. If she could work outside the house, it would be as a janitor because it was similar to her household duties and also because, "you don't have to be brains for that. And I think I'm a pretty good one because all these years I been doing it. I do it at home."

Donna entered the program, through an employment agency because she was seeking medical insurance, which she lacked. But she couldn't find work and ended up babysitting for her children, which provided her with just enough medical insurance for each month. But this made it difficult for her to come to the program, especially with the unpredictable hours of her children's work schedules in the new (non-unionized) stores, "Because I don't know when they gonna work so it's really hard. So that's why with my classes I been slacking…it's so hard like I say, it's like week to week the schedule sometime….I have to watch them. There's nobody and you cannot trust to anybody baby-sitting. It's scary yea…so they prefer me watching them. It's easier."

She also caregave to her husband who was very ill and needed constant attention, despite her own health problems, which she often neglects, "And then like I said, my husband going through that and plus I had an ear infection. My ear's draining and I been

going to the doctor. Then my equilibrial [equilibrium] went off cause I had equilibrial from my ear, so sick. Throwing up throwing up....So that's another problem. So it's just one thing after another thing and it's hard to explain."

She also came to the program to learn to read to her grandchildren and was concerned about their literacy abilities since they spent so much time with her and she couldn't help them read. She constantly reminded her daughter to attend to their reading needs, "But for little books I read some, you know, the ones that are okay I might try. But we always teach her. I always tell my daughter, teach her, she's very smart don't let....cause what happened to me....Cause they gonna suffer later so it's hard cause all my fear when I got my kids. Oh God, I cannot help them."

Donna blamed herself for not getting help with literacy earlier. She said, "I really feel stupid because I didn't do this long ago. Should of. Like I said, I was so embarrassed to tell it. To face somebody and tell them." In the program there is little attention to her family problems, and the focus is on her skills, making her feel "tight up" when she is forced to read like when she was a child in elementary school and had to get up in front of the class. She said, "To me, like if I go in here [to the program], if he going to tell me read, I get all tight up...The brain cannot think. Like holding back.....Then when I read the test, I get so tight up like I get scared really, just like mental block." The program staff had asked Donna to do a public presentation, and she felt bad about having to say no to them. She felt additional pressure from this request, and it created conflict for her, "But right now, to do it, that I'm not good yet. I still not ready. I'm trying to be honest....they asked if I wanted to, but I said I'm not ready for anything yet. Stand up there and hold the paper, read this thing yea. I no can read."

Donna was tutored mainly with Laubach books and tutor reports focused around her guessing sight words, rather than reading them. Her tutor also noted that she was frequently not feeling well, often absent, and her children interrupted her attendance. Apparently, Donna did not do her homework assignments either. When Donna's husband became very ill, she became housebound, with little connection to the program. She admitted she missed the social atmosphere and the other students who made her feel like

she belonged, "Because over here [program], everybody is like you. Maybe not bad. but everybody here for that reason. you know what I mean. But if I was to come in and the other guys not there, I probably would feel real . ." The one activity Donna did do to remain somewhat connected to the program was to bake goodies for a student bake sale. And then she faded away.

Margaret: "So I'm Maybe Kinda Two Steps Ahead"

Margaret, born in 1950, was raised in a Hawaiian homestead community and became a Jehovah Witnesses when she was a teen. Her mother's side of the family, steeped in Hawaiian language and culture, had not caused too much friction in her belief system. She graduated from the local high school and later, in the 1980s, married a local Japanese-American who was also deeply involved in the church. They had one adolescent and were a close family. She had worked as a custodian for many years, and recently switched careers to human services, where she was an aide in an agency and wanted to move up in her job. This would require a certificate from the local community college, where she segued into from the literacy program. Meanwhile her husband was an unemployed welder which was causing financial stress in the family.

Margaret viewed caring at home and work as positive, which was reflective of her cultural mores. She called her mother a "caregiver" and wrote a short essay about the importance of her competency in caring for her 8 children, "my interview ended with a nice warm hug and a kiss to my caregiver my mother. A little emotional from the interview with misty eyes I realized the sacrifices my mother made in her life raising her children that sets the example for me and my siblings to follow." Transmitting the value of caring and also of language was something Margaret recognized as important since her grandmother and mother were punished for speaking Hawaiian in school when they were young. Margaret wanted to continue the legacy of Hawaiian culture by passing on these values to her son, through taking him on family trips to the Queen's trust land. She further reflects on the meaning of this land as part of caring for it, " We learned to love our land, to respect the land. That's the main thing and Lili'uokalani Trust teaches them to respect your aina [land, in Hawaiian]. Take what you can but don't overtake. So we all learned

that. That's the one I impressed on my son—when you take from the land, you just take what you want and need." Land, caring and education are intertwined with Margaret's culture, and her need to continue this tradition through documenting claims of her Hawaiian heritage to receive entitlements for her son, "but it's just that because for the records for us, she [Margaret's mother] claim 100% Hawaiian and then we get 50% because we wanto have Hawaiian homelands. We wanna have education. We wanna have certain things to benefit for us."

In her paid work, Margaret counseled young girls in the bathroom at school as a school custodian and was proud to see some of them grow up and become successful adults in the community, which was a major incentive for her to go into human services, " I got interested with how the kids would act and when they used to work with me as a custodian. they were assigned to me and I saw them and kept the kids busy doing things that they're outta trouble." In order to move up in her aide job, credentials were needed, "And I decided the certificate is opening the ways. I need some kind of education. It opens the way for me to work with other agencies. It helps me to work cause you need some kinda degree nowadays, certification especially in the state of Hawai'i you gonna need a certification like this like that.... and even the teachers have to have a license to teach. Even caretakers, now they have to go back school they need their license. I'm sure that in the future for therapeutic aides we will have to need. So I'm maybe kinda two steps ahead of everybody on this cause I foresee how the state will go to." Attending a human services program at the local community college, was thrilling for her as she claimed, "I'm in the peak of life." But it was very difficult because of her limited skills and readjusting to student life, "30 years been outta school and go right back, hitting the books again. It's not easy, learn everything all from basic again."

Although Margaret enjoyed the class discussions, she found the academic work, particularly writing papers exasperating and was struggling not to fail her classes, "When you in college you have all these writing assignments and research. I hate writing ...I would rather do how human service is--do practical things. Like go to the practical places, like visit practical things." Margaret sometimes used her Jehovah Witness

materials for research in her homework assignments which she did enjoy citing. Coming to the program was good because they "encouraged" her and were "personable" She liked to work with the learning coordinator who she felt was "sweet" and was patient when she asked for help on the computers: "But it's just that getting to the program [learning to locate the software program]. How to write it out. I always have to ask J. and bother her but she's so patient. You know J. so sweet." Writing for Margaret became a prescribed activity focusing on grammar, "I learned proper grammar. Proper spelling. Proper word usage and you know things like that." Margaret was also doing an internship in the program and had to file, Xerox, and conduct other administrative duties, which doubled her dislike for the paperwork involved in social work even though she understood its meaning, "I do some filing, gathering student data hours. I'll be answering phones most office type of things that I hate doing. But as a human service worker if I go into case management you need to assess." While she understands the importance of accountability and documentation, another rising issue in her field, and something that was stressed in the program, it adds to her aversion for writing.

Margaret's husband was supportive and did household duties, in addition to driving her around when her car broke down, "I get a lot of support from my husband…my husband is good--He's up early so he does clothes washing for me and hangs up the clothes." This type of family support was cultivated in their Jehovah Witness church. But she also felt pressure to do more for their church, even while she was struggling with a health problem, "I'm learning in ministry school…I was in it but I dropped out. It's because so many things overwhelming for me. When I got my thyroid, I got nervous.". "She continued with her church work however, as well as her agency job but only returned to the program to say hi to everyone every now and then. Margaret left the program as soon as her internship was over.

Gloria: "I Didn't Want to Know the Vowels"

Gloria was fifty-three, grew up in rural Kona in a large family of sisters, her Hawaiian mother as well as her step-father, who were important figures in her early development. She graduated high school, "by the skin of my teeth" and was in special

education classes, getting help with her reading from extended family. Most of her work was agricultural related and seasonal. She moved to Hilo to find work after her mother and husband died, who she caregave to, received welfare and was being cut off. She was worried about being able to pay her rent. She also had severe asthma, was under the care of a doctor, and needed to find stationary work that did not require too much literacy. She also had a self-reported learning disability but her doctor would not claim that she had one which made it difficult for her to appeal the welfare decision. She was very religious and an active member of her small church.

Her step father and mother encouraged her in sports, the arts, and in hunting, fishing, and driving—involving her in many of these outdoor activities when they saw she had problems reading, "My mom and them made sure I could go on outdoors like canoe paddling and hula dancing" They tried to help her with her school work but eventually, gave up, and "so then my mom and dad just backed off. Encourage me to go to sports." Her sense of being physically strong led her into manual labor. But when she got asthma as an adult, she could no longer count on these types of jobs anymore and it was difficult for her self-image too. Who was going to care for her now that she had these physical problems?

Gloria's mother always wanted her daughter to leave the rural world of agriculture and become "somebody" in cosmopolitan Honolulu, "She [Gloria's mother] wanted me to be somebody. To get ahead. So even knowing that I couldn't read or write, nothing was impossible. I never regretted that in me. You don't know until you try. Nothing is impossible. Oh I said, get on the board and ride it." The dream of her mother persisted in Gloria's memory as well, and made her wonder if this dream would be possible considering all of her current limitations and nobody to care for her, like when she was a girl "My mom wanted me to get out from the coffee field and be somebody. In our household, there were five of us so the oldest take care of the second. The second take care of the third right. So each helping one another."

After a failed attempt at beauty school in Honolulu, she moved back to the Big Island, where she obtained seasonal agricultural work. Then, in her forties, she caregave to her sick mother and her husband. They ended up dying at about the same time and she recalled most vividly the labor involved in her caring, "I had to come home and take care of my husband and clean the house and maintaining my thoughts to prepare myself for his death. Cause he was gonna die pretty soon eventually, and my mom was dying of cancer . So it's all of those things. So that's work cause you have to discipline your mind to be strong. Now that's work."

After they died, she relocated to East Hawai'i, moving in with her sister who was demanding money for rent. But since she couldn't find work, she went on welfare but her caseworkers were pressuring her to find work. The "people behind he desk" were unable to guide her to the right sources, even when she asked for literacy assistance. " I didn't want to work any other job that I had to strain myself…And they wasn't able to help me there….some people behind the desk, they really don't know what they're doing I said." She was pushing herself to locate work which then caused asthma attacks and she was rushed to the hospital numerous times in the middle of the night. When she turned to her church, where she was an active member, for financial support, they could only afford to give her what she called, "love gifts." Gloria also read the Bible to feel comforted and related to it as a "love letter."

Gloria came to the literacy program in a state of panic and as a mandatory requirement. But she was confused by the Hooked on Phonics programs that was given to her when she entered, which she felt pressured to learn, but without a sense of its purpose. She said, "what I really wanted to know was work skills. I didn't want to know the vowels. I didn't want to know the consonants or the period or anything." She felt proud that she had stayed in the program despite that her reading needs went unfulfilled, but did feel cared about by her doctor, "cause I studied that whole year myself. Before I could get a tutor. And I went to Hook[ed] on Phonic[s]. I didn't know a darn thing about that hook on phonics. I didn't know where is it--up or down or words "a" "e"-- it was

very hard to understand because they're so closely woven together. But I didn't give up. I kept coming back and studying cause I had the time to, cause I was under doctor care."

She felt deficient in her language and problematically adopted the program's enforcement of Standard English, "if you are limited in knowledge you don't know how to speak… and realizing in the book, they have it already, but I'm just following out on it when I was studying here." Still, Gloria loved talking and giving presentations to promote the program. She also participated in intakes with other students and had a tutor she worked with who she liked very much (even though the tutor knew relatively nothing about Gloria's terrible financial circumstances). She particularly enjoyed writing a book report of a movie review for her tutor, about the "horse whisperer. " She understood the relationship between the horse and the trainer in terms of trust and confidence, relating it to her own tutoring experience, "the two of them become partners so he shows the trust and yet he's in control and the animals says can I trust you, so I can feel that you're not going to hurt me. So it's like two people coming together. So that's where I finally realized, how everything fit together." This was an unusual assignment. An analysis of Gloria's work folder, stemming from 1994, showed that much time was spent on clerical duties and with lessons in copying and filling in words in workbooks. Only a few materials revealed thoughts in her own words. Although it is true that Gloria desired practice in obtaining administrative skills plus learning how to navigate paperwork and to read and respond to the many bureaucratic forms she received from the government, she also needed to learn how to write in her own words (see, Purcell-Gates, 1995). Although she came many times during the week, her once-a-week sessions with her tutor were not enough to get her to this point. She said it was "faith" that made her stay, " I had no idea what end was up when it came for...Hook[ed] on Phonics. I mean that was a whole year, a year and a half. It was by faith believe me!"

Findings

Caring permeated throughout the women's narratives, and played a large role in their involvement with the program. Yet, this theme was not immediately apparent on the surface of the women's stories. It was their relationships that drew them in and with the

prospect of socio-emotional supports they needed. Some of them were encouraged to stay because of the close relationships they developed in the program, even while they didn't particularly feel like they were progressing in their learning. These women and other learners like them, turned to the program to both compensate for and refine their caring roles and relationships in a way that would not threaten, but expand their identities. The value of caring was set in childhood and reinforced in adulthood, as part of their generation and rural backgrounds. Their caring became a stressful activity for them in this shifting socio-economic environment. When they responded to their caring needs outside of the program, the program couldn't formally accommodate them (attendance rules, for example), although, their tutors might informally offer help or loosen standards. Like Donna, who felt like she was "supposed to be helping" all the time, saying no to family members, in order to attend to herself, by coming to school, could bring on both personal and public shame to the women. Furthermore, asking Donna to do a public presentation on a deeply sensitive issue which she had not yet emotionally processed, created conflict for her. Since the program emphasized individualized service and skills, many women were forced to choose between these and their ingrained roles and responsibilities. Understanding these relationships and values within the context of Hawai'i was important for gathering cultural and gendered perspectives of this problem.

The women, when asked why they sought the program, said at first they did so for skills. Gloria told me it was "work skills." Lourdes told me she needed "spelling skills" and Margaret said it was for "writing skills". But their stories yielded more complex reactions underneath these responses that connected with the economy, their cultures, and increasing institutionalization of their caring practices. Lourdes' was fearful of being taken advantage of at work because of the terminology, and little training. Margaret was concerned about supporting her family, and getting the appropriate credentials. Yasuko was worried about her daughter, who was the only one she was close to, leaving her with the others who could make crucial decisions about her life if she were to get ill. Donna, was concerned about her medical payments since her husband was getting sicker and withholding funds from her, and she was getting poorer and sicker, with no foreseeable support.

The women liked to learn collectively, with others helping them, and were not used to being in a world where literacy was a barrier, or where individual skills were needed to survive or succeed. This was the case particularly for the ABE women like Donna, Gloria, and Margaret, who often felt forced into this "new world" of legal documentation, certification, and bureaucratic relating. Donna remarked, "before days the parents don't care, you learn, you learn, you don't learn, you just don't learn. But you need education you do. Like without reading and writing, you cannot do nothing.... you have to read and write. Cause you gotta take orders. You gotta read the thing. I mean like everything is really reading. So it's hard." Likewise, Gloria recalled a world that did not demand literacy skills but made her feel like she was a member. "Just to work with your hand and be able to get paid, that's like you're on a team. You belong. You're not a outcast," she said as she fondly remembered her macadamia loading job that had color-coded boxes instead of text. Yet she told me she also didn't want to go on as a "a frog in a pond," hoping to one day carry out her mother's dreams to be "somebody."

The women sought print and electronic materials outside of the program to feel emotionally strong and receive missing nurturance too. This type of activity was different from the reading that was expected of them in the literacy program and above their accorded literacy levels. Margaret, Gloria, and Lourdes for example, all read religious materials for the purposes of caring and comforting themselves and to fulfill their caring roles in their communities. The popular culture or genre materials the women read and wanted to read outside of the program contrasted to the English grammar materials and lessons, computerized assessments, and skills-based orientation of the literacy program. This was the program's way of caring for the women, with the belief that these skills would translate into higher economic benefits for them. Rationales for computer use linked technology to the needs of the market and low costs to literacy programs, all of which were viewed as increasing opportunities for learners. Citations like the following were common to hear and see in the program:

> If adult basic education skills were "computerized," could we affect more people more quickly at equal or lower cost?....Adults who learn basic skills on a computer also learn in the process about computers. The operational techniques absorbed as a by-product of instruction become in themselves marketable skills. These adults stand a better chance of competing for entry-level word processing jobs and job-training programs. (excerpt from, "The Case for Computers" in the Business Council for Effective Literacy, July 1985 Newsletter, in the literacy program, 1991 report)

While the women often adopted these beliefs, they did so problematically and often felt confused, by the standard English grammar focus, which did not address their other needs and sometimes made them feel ashamed of what they missed earlier, like Donna who said, "I should have done this long ago." The women were looking to the program, like they did to many other sources, for emotional reciprocity and to feel a part of a community that could sustain them and function as a positive extension of their network relations. The women were responding first and foremost to their needs and roles outside of the program--emotional, economic, and cultural ones. Their desires were about connecting to this "new world" in meaningful ways and receiving socio-emotional support to better operate in it; including redefining their caring in more comprehensive terms. Their decisions to come, stay, and leave the program were more of a function of their roles and relations than a cost-benefit analysis.

Educational Significance

Literacy programs can help learners persist by paying attention to their histories, their relationships, and deeper meanings of what they say—beyond the face value of an initial intake interview. It is important to understand the internal tensions and transformations learners make when they participate in a program, and move into a new literate culture (Fingeret & Drennon, 1997). This entrance may produce shame about their pasts, and tensions around expectations about where they think they should be

(Fingeret & Drennon, 1997). This holistic orientation helps programmers design curriculum and instruction around learners' needs and interests that emotionally connect to their lives, in addition to the worlds around them, and seem relevant. It allows for contextual learning based on students' lives and situations, which integrates literacy into the curriculum rather than focusing on it as an autonomous skill (Street, 1986; Fingeret & Drennon, 1997; Wilson, 1993). The need for flexible programming which allow for women to continue their caring roles outside of the program may keep them longer and give them time to redefine these roles and learn self-care techniques. Donna for example, may have benefited from a home tutoring situation or from frequent phone calls and counseling. Learning about the areas of learners' lives that promote conflicts for them in learning and attending a program, helps instructors judge progress according to learners' small accomplishments rather what is missing from prescribed standards. Teaching self-advocacy and supporting women to develop communities of support is critical for validating women's private roles in their families and communities, while building on their public roles. Most importantly, programs can start paying attention to students' socio-emotional needs that play a large role in supporting them to persist in literacy programs. It is important to learn about the forces in learners' lives, and build in support mechanisms (see, Comings, Parrella, Soricone, 1999). In this way, literacy programs can act as sponsors (see, Brandt, 1998), supporting people carefully, critically, and with understanding, within the competitive "new world" of literacy.

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